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ABSTRACT

Themes from the author's research into cultural interfaces and cross-cultural encounters have implications for organization development (OD) and training for internationalizing business and developing competencies for working effectively with people of diverse cultures. These themes are: (1) unawareness in the United States of cultural unawareness and the efficacy of recognizing this unawareness for developing effective intercultural interactions; (2) people learn what they have learned to learn and are motivated to learn--not from experience, "committed" OD and training are required for developing international and intercultural expertise; (3) effective intercultural relations rest heavily on motivation and appropriate values; (4) certain values, motivations and personality traits are necessary but not sufficient for effective intercultural communications and interactions; (5) unfamiliarity with the complexity of culture, the utility of cross-cultural perspective, the distinction between reality and reality-as-perceived, and the tendency of humans to assess others with yardsticks of their own culture all hinder effective interactions; (6) limited awareness of the influence of culture and Eurocentric bias applies also to social science knowledge. Education, training, and OD interventions focused on these themes are essential to develop competencies for working effectively with people of diverse culture. (Contains 62 references) (Author/DB)

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Project Number Thirty-Four

CULTURAL UNAWARENESS: A Critical Issue for Education, Training, and Development

Popie Marinou Mohring
December 1989

university of minnesota
DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION • ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

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Abstract

Themes from my research into cultural interfaces and cross-cultural encounters have implications for organization development (OD) and training for (a) internationalizing business and (b) developing competencies for working effectively with people of diverse cultures. These themes are:

1. Unawareness in the United States of cultural unawareness and the efficacy of recognizing this unawareness for developing effective intercultural interactions.

2. People learn what they have learned to learn and are motivated to learn -- not from experience. Sojourns abroad and minimal culture-specific orientations are inadequate. *Committed* OD and training are required for developing international and intercultural expertise.

3. Effective intercultural relations rest heavily on motivation and appropriate values. Many are not value-driven to develop the needed skills. Ethnocentrism has many rewards for many people.

4. Certain values, motivations, and personality traits are necessary but not sufficient for effective intercultural communications and interactions. Theoretical understandings of the concept of culture and related skills for learning how to learn are also essential.

5. Unfamiliarity with the complexity of culture, the utility of the cross-cultural perspective, the distinction between reality and reality-as-perceived, and the tendency of humans to assess others with the yardsticks of their own culture all hinder effective interactions. Eliminating this unfamiliarity would greatly enhance cultural awareness and the effectiveness of work/play communications and interactions.

6. Limited awareness of the influence of culture and Eurocentric bias applies also to social science knowledge. We must convey this to shareholders, such as students and corporations, for the sake of professional ethics, for discouraging dependence on the expertise of others, and for encouraging the development of skills for independent effectiveness.

Education, training, and OD interventions focused on these themes are essential to develop competencies for working effectively with people of diverse cultures.

Introduction: The Problem

The context of this paper is a broad set of concerns to which I will refer as "The Problem": the challenge and the concerns that cultural diversity poses for the world-wide interdependence of modern times and the related need to develop cultural awareness and intercultural competence. Increasingly in the United States, people lament "cultural parochialism" and "cultural imperialism," and advocate an "international" approach to life. They argue that "thinking internationally" *should* be part of the education of Americans as a people who live in a world of increasing cultural, political, and economic interdependence, and who frequently will work abroad and at home with individuals who do not share their ways of life. However, as is set forth in greater detail below, the imperatives for functioning globally are complicated by (a) the importance of motivation and values; (b) the unawareness of cultural unawareness, that is, individuals don't know about culture and its implications and they don't know that they don't know about them; and (c) the tendency of humans to assess different cultures by using the values of their own as the standard.

The Problem has evoked much discussion nationally and locally; has highlighted a *need for change* in business and industry, educational institutions, and government; and has led to a chain of efforts and structural modifications to address these concerns (Anderson, 1988; Burn, 1980; Coalition for the Advancement of Foreign Languages and International Studies, forthcoming; Council on Learning, 1980; Lambert, 1980; Michigan State University, 1980; National Assembly on Foreign Language and International Studies, 1980; National Governors Association, 1989; Study Commission on Global Education, 1988; President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, 1975; Tonkin & Edwards, 1981; University of Minnesota, 1980, 1982; Ward, 1977).

Although the Problem has long been with us, concern about it has

become particularly intense concurrent with a perceived loss of the competitive advantages enjoyed by U.S. businesses since World War II. Concern about the challenges posed by the international marketplace is reflected in the often heard assessment that U.S. businesses now have no choice but to deal globally. "If they do not globalize, they will simply perish," maintained the International Human Resources manager of General Motors (Pasquier, 1988). This concern is reflected in the Academy of Management's decision to focus more concertedly on international management and global competition. The following quotes sum up the situation:

> And our devoting this issue to an international focus is perhaps merely recognizing the obvious: Most businesses today are involved at some level in international matters, or they had better be for long-term survival. (Burke, 1988, p. 4)
>
> If the United States and other nations are to develop into successful competitors, it is imperative that greater efforts are invested in developing managers of tomorrow who understand global economics and political dynamics and can act accordingly. Among U.S. multinationals there is a need for managers who are mobile and adaptable, can deal effectively with a wide variety of people, and feel at ease and knowledgeable in different cultures of the world. If they fail to select and develop managers who possess these skills and abilities, countries like the United States run the very real risk of becoming what might be termed a "newly deindustrialized country" (in contrast to a newly industrialized country or NIC). (Steers & Miller, 1988, p. 21)
>
> Intercultural sensitivity is not natural. It is not part of our primate past, nor has it characterized most of human history. Cross-cultural contact often has been accompanied by

> bloodshed . . . . Today, the failure to exercise intercultural sensitivity is not simply bad business or bad morality -- it is self-destructive. So we face a choice: overcome the legacy of our history, or lose history itself for all time. (Bennett, 1986, p. 27)

The central issues of the globalization of life revolve around the concept of culture and the problems that cultural differences create for a world that has become very interdependent. The purpose of this paper is not to discuss definitions of culture nor to add yet another definition to those offered in the literature. Rather, it is to discuss the themes in *people's* encounters with cultural phenomena that are important for culture-related education, training, and OD. Important aspects of my approach to culture are included in the discussion of thematic issues below.

Culture infiltrates nearly everything; it is a complex and multifaceted entity. Consequently, there are many approaches to and definitions of culture. One example is: "The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another -- the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influences a human group's response to its environment." (Hofstede, 1980, p. 25)

The paper focuses on *cultural unawareness* (an issue intrinsic to The Problem), the educational value and practicality of recognizing this unawareness, and developing an understanding of the concept of culture and the skills to learn how to learn (Hughes-Wiener, 1986; McCaffery, 1986; Mohring, 1988) about cultural phenomena. These themes are organized into an action-oriented frame of reference having implications for education, training, and OD. In addition to the relevant literature, the research endeavors, work, and experience on which I rely are described in the postscript.

Themes in Cultural Interfaces

The culture-related themes set forth below are: motivation and values,

atheoretical approaches, culture-general and culture-specific, theoretical understanding of culture, reality and reality-as-perceived, cultural parochialism, the unawareness of cultural unawareness and the cross-cultural fallacy, and culture and traditional disciplines.

Motivation and Values

The distinction between *positive* and *normative* analyses is central to the social sciences and to training and OD. So-called "objective" studies of human phenomena are rarely value- and culture-free. Some phenomena and some approaches, however, are much more value-laden than others. A major aspect of The Problem is that it is *not value-free.*

It is easy to find laypersons and scholars who, on normative grounds, *believe* in the importance of culture, pluralism, global perspective, anti-ethnocentrism, and lofty pursuit of cultural egalitarianism and intercultural understanding. These believers' arguments do not rest on sheer faith. More often than not, they rest on powerful positive analyses. My observations and interviews, however, also uncovered many laypersons and scholars who either are *nonbelievers* -- who stand for *anti-anti-ethnocentrism,* much like Levi-Strauss (Geertz, 1986) -- or are simply *indifferent bystanders* to issues of The Problem that are hot in the hearts of believers. People thus fall into camps of believers, nonbelievers, and indifferent bystanders.

During the year I spent in Singapore (1982-3), I learned that Caucasian expatriates (expats), especially academics and their spouses, often live in culturally homogeneous bubbles, not out of value preference and choice, but as a result of frustrated efforts to enter the worlds of the locals. Asians, including individuals with the ethnic backgrounds similar to those of local people, for example, Chinese from Hong-Kong and Malay from Malaysia, reported similar difficulties, although of a much lesser degree.

However, it is also true that *many* other expats, especially in the worlds

of business and industry, live in culturally homogeneous bubbles *out of choice*. For them, the attraction of cultural homogeneity is not necessarily the result of xenophobia, nor of an ethnocentric attribution of superiority that Singaporians refer to as "acting like colonials." Instead:

1. The *positive valence of similarity* and the related psychological comfort of familiarity and, conversely, the *negative valence of dissimilarity* and related discomfort of nonfamiliarity are potent sociopsychological driving forces. This finding accords with findings in social psychology related to interpersonal attraction (Byrne, 1971, 1961; Huston, 1974).
2. Social and residential segregations are reinforced by income differences and their effects, cultural and value differences notwithstanding.
3. Believers assume that a sojourn in another country is bound to be educational, enriching, and enlarging of one's horizons. My findings show that this is not true for many people. It is important for intercultural trainers and believers to keep reminding themselves that *not everyone* shares their assumptions and enthusiasms about cross-cultural experiences. Further, some people simply cannot cope with, let alone learn to overcome and profit from, culture shock (Adler, 1986). Their ways of coping are denial and flight.
4. Many people are in Singapore or Sumatra not for educational enlightenment and personal growth or encounter with Asian mystique, but because the pay and standard of living are better than in Texas or Australia, or because they are sent by their companies, or because too many people in their home countries have PhDs like theirs. They recreate, as best they can, the life of

their hometowns in their social bubbles. They do this near-instinctively, usually lacking a self-conscious purpose because the image of life in their hometowns is the life to which they are conditioned and accustomed. They do not necessarily -- as believers tend to infer -- choose bubbles out of xenophobia or ethnocentric superiority.

5. A prominent lamentation of visiting academics, and a *lamentable waste of expensive talent* for the National University of Singapore (NUS), was their immense underutilization. The Singaporians recognized their need for the expertise that the visiting academics could offer. The visiting academics, however, though willing, tended to behave much like brides in olden days: sure of their desirability to the groom and aware of the impropriety for brides to initiate action, they took for granted that the groom would approach them. The Singaporians, however, did not play groom in this scenario. They, too, exhibited bride-like behavior: "It is the visiting faculty who should approach us."

The canteens at NUS offered a good and inexpensive lunch and a grand spot for an unobtrusive participant observer. The segregation of seating arrangements was impressive! Locals had lunch with other locals. Expats had lunch with other expats. In interviews, I heard the expatriates say, "It is *they* who should [initiate, gesture, signal willingness to approach and act friendly]," and the Singaporians say, "It is *they* who should . . . ."

Learning to value diversity and to develop intercultural competence often requires the skill of approaching and converting strangers into friends in order to make the companion skills operable. This calls for insight and effort. The skill is easy to describe, but its practice is not at all easy. Further, such skill is more difficult for some individuals than for others.

Learning, practicing, and devoting the effort required for intercultural competence *presuppose* personal inclination and motivation. But, for shy individuals unaccustomed to approaching and initiating interactions with strangers or for individuals raised in cultures that teach people to be cautious of strangers, the motivation and the effort needed are far greater than for others.

It is important for trainers and believers to recognize that not having, or not wanting to have, close cross-cultural relationships is not necessarily the result of ethnocentric superiority, xenophobia, or lack of competence. It is also important to recognize that *the development of cordial cross-cultural relationships at home or abroad requires motivation, value orientations toward other people, and personal choices conducive to their development.* Similarly, the efficacy of all intercultural training tools and approaches (e.g., cultural assimilators, cross-cultural simulations, university courses at home, and studies abroad) reported in the literature (Landis & Brislin, 1983) *presupposes* motivations and value orientations conducive to the development of cultural awareness, global perspective, intercultural understanding, and the like. A major aspect of The Problem, then, and of all OD/training modes addressing it, is precisely that *a great many people are neither motivated nor value-driven to develop these skills.* Ethnocentrism has much utility for many people. They are rewarded by the security, familiarity, predictability, sense of being right (and much more) that ethnocentric orientations confer.

Are those who are committed to successfully internationalizing education and business the mainstream in the United States? Or does the rhetoric of internationalization actually mask cultural unawareness and, thus, an unwillingness to devote the resources that are essential to successful internationalization? My data from nationals and expatriates in Southeast Asia, who were associated with U.S. corporations and universities, and from professionals involved in international consulting reveal no OD and no training at all, or OD

and training that amount to little more than providing material to read on the flight across the Pacific about "what to do and not do in Japan."

It is, therefore, understandable that about half of transplanted employees leave before their assignments abroad are completed. This is immensely costly in both money and human distress. Although adequate training is costly, the losses resulting from inadequate training far exceed any amount of resources that could conceivably be spent to increase cultural awareness and intercultural competence (Swanson & Geroy, 1987, 1984; Cullen, Sawzin, Sisson, & Swanson, 1976).

In summary, cultural training and OD efforts for the internationalization of business and education are critical needs generated by world-wide interdependence, cultural diversity, and their effects on the bottom line. Fulfilling these needs requires appropriate *values and value changes* -- not simply skills and objective criteria in cost-benefit analysis. My studies reveal a widely held belief that in the United States (unlike in more traditional societies) change is valued. This belief can be misleading. It actually applies only to change that is congruent with U.S.-American[1] values, not to change in the values themselves. *All education, training, and OD activities that are responsive to the implications of culture are bound to rest heavily on normative and motivational prerequisites.* Thus, ethical issues become very important in training, consulting, and OD related to culture (Martin & Paige, 1983). Professional ethics *and efficacy* call for open recognition that *values* are intertwined with the positive analyses and objectives of the internationalization of business and education and with the development of global perspective and intercultural competencies.

Atheoretical Approaches

One major component of The Problem, then, is that internationalization and intercultural effectiveness require motivation and certain value orienta-

tions, or value changes conducive to their development. Values and motivation are necessary, *but they are not sufficient.* The second important component is cognizance of the concept of culture and its implications (Downs, 1969; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1983).

The extensive lack of familiarity with the concept of culture and its implications is a pervasive finding of my research. Atheoretical approaches (approaches that lack knowledge of essential properties of culture) prevail. Simplistic and highly specific understandings of culture abound that, to overstate only slightly, amount to equating Chinese culture with the customs of the celebration of the Chinese New Year. Cookbook approaches to culture (e.g., what to do and not do in Japan) prevail. They have harmful consequences (McCaffery, 1986).

The action/doing emphasis at the core of "The values Americans live by" (Kohls, 1984b) reinforces the tendency to think of "theoretical" as opposite to "practical," as if to say what is theoretical is, *ipso facto*, not practical. This widely held view of theory is erroneous. My research findings confirm the Lewinian emphasis that there is nothing more practical than a good theory. Especially in regard to cultural phenomena, my findings strongly suggest that there is nothing more impractical than to operate[2] without the benefit and practicality of a *theoretical* understanding of basic characteristics of culture and its implications.

This lack of theoretical understanding of culture in general applies to Asians and Caucasians, to locals and expats, to academics and business people in cosmopolitan Singapore, and to people with extensive exposure to foreign cultures. The latter group exemplifies that *people do not necessarily learn from experience. They learn what they have learned to learn and what they are motivated to learn.* Caucasian academics, especially U.S.-American men, were at a loss about how to navigate in the Chinese culture and bureaucracy

at NUS. They did not know how to go about developing productive and mutually satisfactory work/play relations with their Singaporian colleagues, even though most of these Singaporians had been educated in Western universities. The same lack of know-how characterized Singaporian academics.

Similarly, in my work with anti-poverty programs, lack of theoretical understandings of culture was evident in my observations of the interactions between predominantly white middle-class U.S.-American professionals and low-income whites and minorities. The story was not different in Canada, except that the problem between U.S.-Americans and English-(as a first language) speaking Canadians was more subtle and more puzzling to participants. Using the iceberg metaphor for the concept of culture, the many surface similarities (e.g., language, material/technological culture) of the tips of the icebergs of the two cultures led individuals to operate under the assumption that the hidden parts of the iceberg were also the same.

The phenomenon exemplified in the Canadian/U.S.-American cross-cultural encounter is quite common. Cultural disorientation and many aspects of culture shock are often more perturbing in an apparently similar culture than in one that is obviously dissimilar. A major reason for this is that, in contrast to dissimilar environments, culturally similar environments provide fewer signals to warn the unsuspecting of the presence of cultural differences. Individuals would profit from awareness of this similarity-contrast cognitive and cultural phenomenon.

Culture-general and Culture-specific

Intercultural trainers commonly draw a distinction between the concepts of *culture-general* and *culture-specific* (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1983, pp. 124-5). This distinction, and the finding that many people are unfamiliar with it and its implications are important to culture-related OD and training.

The focus of the culture-specific approach and of area-studies is on one

or a group of cultures, countries, or areas of the world. The focus of the culture-general perspective applies to the concept of culture, to cultures in general, to some cultures and not to others. The core of the differences between the two perspectives is *not* in the content they utilize. Rather, it is that: In area-studies and culture-specific approaches, the *end* is knowledge of a specific culture or related group of cultures. By contrast, culture-general perspectives utilize knowledge of one's own and of other culture(s) as a *means* of learning about the concept of culture and its implications to our understanding of human phenomena, and about other notions/concepts of more universal applicability.

The subject matter and content of the two approaches may be the same, but the *questions* one asks, the *inferences* one draws and the *skills* (or expertise) one develops in learning and teaching are radically different. Comparative evaluation of the relative merits of these two perspectives is equivalent to equating oranges with apples. What is accomplished by culture-specific and area-studies approaches is not accomplished by culture-general approaches, and vice-versa.[3]

This paper's approach, for example, is culture-general, *not* culture-specific. With a culture-specific approach, one may infer that the issues discussed in this paper, for example, the seating patterns of lunch socializing at NUS in Singapore, apply only to the seating patterns of socializing over lunch that a Greek from Minneapolis, Minnesota, observed in Singapore; and one may also infer that this culture-specific subject matter does not pertain to, for example, Human Resource Development and OD at 3M, Honeywell, or the University of Minnesota.

With a culture-general approach, the specific groups, such as expats, Singaporians, or U.S.-Americans, and the specific social behavior, such as sitting arrangements in the canteens of NUS are incidental. They happen to

contain culture-specific matter that *reflects* theoretical aspects of human cultural phenomena in a data-base. As is the case with experience, neither does one necessarily learn from data. *One learns from the questions* that one's interests suggest asking. Being familiar with the concept of culture, all one has to do to detect equivalences is to substitute theoretically equivalent categories from the culture-specific content featured in his/her data-set and concerns. For example, in lieu of expats and locals, one might substitute the socializing patterns within and between the groups of psychologists and anthropologists in academic settings or the interactions of individuals from different divisions in corporations. In my participant observations, the thematic similarities are many and impressive. The many people-related problems that arise from corporate mergers and acquisitions are also the theoretical equivalents of the expats and the locals. They are all *intercultural problems people and groups have with diversity.*

Literally all the sojourners interviewed in Singapore emphasized, *post facto,* the need for country-specific information about the demands of everyday living. They strongly recommend that sojourners equip themselves with as detailed information about everyday living as is possible. Interviewees enjoyed describing the humor, the distress, the confusion, and the despair of many problems that could have been eliminated or coped with better had they had the right information. Due mainly to cultural unawareness, however, the vast majority of expats did not pursue culture-related knowledge. The very few (3) who had some cultural orientation prior to their coming to Singapore found it immensely helpful and strongly recommended the utility of such training. The many who had no cross-cultural training recognized its usefulness *after* they were in Singapore for some time. Reflecting cultural unawareness, they indicated that they wouldn't have considered it necessary *prior* to their sojourn in Singapore.

The economic/technological development of Singapore offers many of the amenities to which expats from the first world are accustomed. English is the official language and is spoken and understood nearly everywhere. Yet, despite Singapore's comparatively easy conditions, expats' most time-consuming activity was complaining about the state of affairs in general, the characteristics of the Singapore society and Singaporians, the heat, the housing, the noise, the maids, and so on into the night. The complaints heard from the locals about the complaints of expats were equal in intensity and scope. The expats' complaining was cyclical and tapered off during the last third of their stays. Cultural familiarity and sophistication are not a major reason for this decline; it is, rather, that by this time individuals had acquired basic information needed to cope with the demands of everyday life.

Similarly, for a *mutually* more effective, productive, satisfying, and less problematic sojourn, local interviewees emphasized the value of culture-specific knowledge. The view of a top administrator at NUS is typical: "Visiting academics should learn about us before coming. They should know our customs and traditions, our government, our institutions and our cultural heritages. It is very important for them to know about our colonial past . . ." Is such knowledge acquisition feasible for a three-month stay to teach classes in, for example, computer sciences? For overcommitted academics or business people, such expectations are, at best, unrealistic for most of them.

Valuable though culture-specific information about the society of one's sojourn abroad or about the backgrounds of individuals encountered in one's work in this country (e.g., counseling Asian refugees) may be, two major clusters of problems are bound together with the acquisition, interpretation, and use of such information.

One stems from the *multi*-cultural nature of interfaces and encounters brought about by the worldwide interdependence and mobility of modern times.

As demonstrated by the research of Albert (1983), Triandis (1983), and Triandis, Brislin, & Hui (1988), among others, much like bilingual competence, individuals can acquire bicultural competence. This increased knowledge and effectiveness requires specialization. Its acquisition requires time and energy. The increased effectiveness of, for example, U.S.-American teachers of students with Spanish backgrounds does little for the teaching of Cambodians in the same classrooms.

Worldwide interdependence and mobility create a need for managers (and many other professions) who, as noted earlier, "are mobile and adaptable, can deal effectively with a wide variety of people, and feel at ease and knowledgeable in different cultures of the world." (Steers & Miller, 1988, p. 21). This knowledgeability is unattainable through culture-specific content. The world has many cultures which keep changing; cultures involve expansive bodies of knowledge and factual information.

The other major cluster of problems bound together with culture-specific approaches stems from the finding that, in the absence of familiarity with the concept of culture and skills for self-directed learning, individuals lack guidelines for the acquisition, interpretation, and effective use of culture-specific information. Furthermore, even very useful factual information can do (and all too often does) more harm than good. My research in Singapore and elsewhere (see postscript) provides much evidence of such harm. The extensive cookbook use of culture-specific information, including stereotypes, is but one example. Problems stemming from this unfamiliarity are important and require a separate paper to focus on their discussion.

Theoretical Understanding of Culture

The benefits of theory need to be understood with the meaning and implications exemplified in the following quote (Lukermann, 1985).

"It is a theory, so it does not tell you what to do." The

> quotation is from a member of the Nobel selection committee commenting on the work of Franco Modigliani, who had just been awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science . . . Above all, it [Modigliani's theory] didn't prescribe an answer. (p. 3)

To people in cross-cultural situations the benefits of familiarity with basic theoretical properties of culture (e.g., the iceberg metaphor, complexity, systemic properties) and of skills for a learning-how-to-learn approach cannot be overstated. To elaborate:

The culture-specific information gathered in Singapore during the first two months devoted to exploration indicated that expats socialize with other expats and not with locals, claiming that it is very difficult to develop close relationships with locals. In accordance with a philosophical and methodological preference to include myself as a subject/object of inquiries, the research in Singapore incorporated the following research/action theme: Will it be possible to break the barriers between expats and locals? Whether successful or not, exploring the factors facilitating and hindering the achievement of this objective would be challenging.

The motivation to become an insider was thus extremely strong. This high level of motivation was needed for the extensive psychological effort required to convert strangers into friends and to overcome the many structural barriers that made it difficult to develop close relations with local people in Singapore (Buruma, 1988). I had the advantage of a cultural conditioning (Mohring, 1985) that does not entail fear of strangers.

However, although this motivation was a major contributor to and, indeed, a prerequisite for breaking cultural barriers and forming close and mutually rewarding relationships with Asians, it did not account for the reason that I was able to do so and other expats were not. Parenthetically, my assertions are based on clinical interviews and participant-as-observer obser-

vations and discussions. I do not have personality inventories to compare scores on personality attributes, such as ethnocentrism.

The argument that motivation is necessary but not sufficient applies as well to attitudes and personality characteristics that research literature associates with intercultural competence. Like motivation, attitudes and personality characteristics contributed to and, indeed, many, such as nonjudgmental and respectful behavior, were prerequisites for developing successful intercultural relationships. They were necessary conditions but were not what tipped the balance between my experiences in Singapore and those of many individuals *who were interested* but did not succeed in developing close relationships with Singaporians.

I confidently account for the difference between my experiences and those of most other expats by their not having *familiarity with the concept of culture and its implications for the development of close relations in a collectivistic society* (Mohring, 1985; Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988; Triandis, Bontempo, & Villareal, 1988). This familiarity provided broad, highly abstract action guidelines that were theoretical and, thus, practical and adaptable to specific circumstances for *how to* go about developing close and mutually rewarding relationships and friendships with Asians. For example:

As I describe in the postscript, my research and experience in Singapore profited from previous experiences and studies revolving around various facets of culture. What I describe in this paper -- for example, cultural unawareness and the importance that this unawareness be recognized; the complexity of cultures and the consequent heuristic value of recognizing one's ignorance; asking questions and, more generally, adopting a learning approach -- are themes I rediscovered, confirmed, better understood, and *acted* upon in Singapore, but were not new themes. A very important implication for education, training, and OD is the *finding that many of the cross-cultural problems*

I observed in others but did not experience in Singapore were problems that indeed were painfully familiar from my cross-cultural earlier encounters and unfamiliarity with theories of culture.

In Singapore, familiarity with the concept of culture dictated that I retreat, from time to time, into the easy life of the cultural familiarity and consequent psychological comfort of Singapore's Greeks and U.S.-Americans in order to unwind and recuperate from cross-cultural stress and fatigue (Barma, 1983). But theory also indicated that, in order to get to know Singaporians, it was important not to get too comfortably settled in the life of Greeks and Americans transplanted to Singapore.

Guided by an understanding of the concept of culture, I operated with the hypothesis that in Singapore, too, after developing intimate friendships with Asians, there would be (and was) ease and comfort with them. It is efficacious to be aware that in collectivistic/familistic societies (such as Singapore and, in fact, most of the world), (a) *people tend to draw sharper distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, (b) relationships within in-groups are far more close, intimate, and binding than is the case in individualistic societies such as the United States, and (c) immense caution is needed in initial face-to-face encounters.*

I operated with the hypothesis (valid, as it turned out) that in collectivistic cultures one is likely to experience the ritual of an initial phase of being in limbo -- neither an outsider nor yet an insider (Mohring, 1985; Triandis, 1972). It is a phase in which one feels tense and in need of caution as if one were walking on eggs; a phase in which, if one is successful at generating interest, one feels examined and evaluated from top to toe.

Theory also suggested that to influence the gate-keeping forces to usher one inside requires respectful behavior; theory also predicted that the insiders' world and culture would most likely be *fundamentally different.*

With an insider's status the cultural differences between Southeast Asians and myself remained the same, but the tension, stress, discomfort, fatigue, misunderstandings, and the like associated with intercultural encounters disappeared. Nearly always in my cross-cultural experiences -- in Southeast Asia and in Canada, as well as with Blacks, Native Americans, Chicanos, and low-income whites in the United States -- insider's status has been associated with an atmosphere of human egalitarianism, mutual respect, and a caring familistic relationship, including guidance and protection *that are so very helpful (and worth seeking) in unfamiliar sociocultural environments.*

I had the good luck to find one quasi-familistic introduction to a Singaporian. In collectivistic/familistic societies, opening the door of one person's home leads to many networks and, consequently, opportunities to develop many close relationships with their relatives and friends, the friends' relatives and their friends, their maids and their gardeners, and, from them, to know some of the low-income people that expats hardly ever get a chance to meet. Especially in research endeavors, one must keep in mind and prevent the high likelihood, in collectivistic cultures, of ending up in (and with) *only one* extended network of friends and relatives.

My good luck in having a quasi-familistic introduction was not accidental. It came from familiarity with the concept of "collectively" versus "individually" oriented societies (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988; Triandis, Bontempo, & Villareal, 1988). Knowing of the importance of a *personal* introduction in collectivistic/familistic societies, I exerted much effort in searching for it prior to going to Singapore. Knowing also of the importance of reciprocity in collectivistic societies, I searched especially (and had the good fortune of finding) a personal introduction from a Minnesotan who had done a good deed for a Singaporian. As theory predicted, Singapore's Chinese, Malays, and Hindus go out of their way to reciprocate a good deed.

Culturally unaware in their encounters, locals and expats were trapped and victimized by the cross-cultural fallacy with which I was painfully familiar and describe in greater detail below. Expats assumed, for example, that informal socializing will materialize in the manner that it does in their hometowns, that is from the workplace. However, in collectivistic/familistic societies, one has hardly any chance to develop close relationships with workplace acquaintances. Knowing this can save much wasted effort, frustration, and complaining.

In summary, in the manner of schemata, the concepts of collectivism and individualism encapsulate core differences between North American and North European cultural ways, on the one hand, and most of the world's remaining cultures, on the other. (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988, provides an excellent summary of the individualism/collectivism divide). Familiarity with the concept of culture and with this divide provides immensely helpful guidelines that most expats lack. Like a catalyst, this teachable familiarity contributes greatly to contrasting intercultural interactions and experience.

Reality and Reality-as-Perceived

Since Heider's (1958) influential work, attribution theory has become a major emphasis in social psychology with contributions focused on culture and intercultural training (Bochner, 1985; Triandis, 1972, 1983). My special interests revolve around people's (by contrast to academic) theories of attribution.

Some might say people -- the proverbial "persons in the street" -- do not have theories; they act and they are act-ors, but it is the social scientists who develop theories to explain people's actions, thoughts, and feelings. Others might say that this is not true. My studies have convinced me that people have theories.

Cultures are *complex and multifaceted entities.* With this understanding, different definitions of culture and approaches to it that abound in the litera-

ture are not necessarily incompatible. Rather, they often involve examining different facets of the multifaceted concept of culture. One important facet is *peoples'* theories of the cosmos, human nature (the self concept), society, or the way the world goes around. These theories are embedded in peoples' "common-sense" knowledge, which includes their theories of attribution and which provides guidelines and causal explanations for behavior. Much like wearing color-tinted glasses, these theories convert reality into *reality-as-perceived.*

One's thought processes preclude one from knowing the "objective" reality of what she or he perceives. One can know that "real" reality only in its as-perceived version. This version is the reality that is filtered through the cognitive lenses made up of (or heavily influenced by) cultural constructs, that is, categories and concepts, assumptions, value orientations, norms, attitudes, and cognitive conditioning. It is because people from different cultures have different cognitive lenses that the same behavior often has, as-perceived, different meanings, understandings, and attributions. For example, patterns of behavior that, in the United States, are perceived as demonstrating personal freedom and independence tend to be perceived as lack of care and concern for others by collectively oriented people worldwide.

The learning of this deceivingly simple distinction between reality and reality-as-perceived is immensely important for effective OD and interpersonal interactions (including communication problems, problem solving, and conflict resolution), especially when different cultures are involved. This special importance stems from the fact that cultural constructs profoundly affect the conversion of reality into reality-as-perceived. It is generally difficult (more difficult for some than for others) to learn to recognize and to act on this distinction. *It is as if the mind has a built-in inclination to assume that the as-perceived reality <u>is</u> reality.*

Not knowing or not acting on the distinction between reality and reality-as-perceived is at the core of intercultural misattributions and misunderstandings and is a major hindrance to developing intercultural competence and mutually productive and successful work/play relationships.

How does one act on the distinction between reality and reality-as-perceived? First, one must understand the distinction well and realize its importance. Then, one must learn to guard against the tendency to fall back on the assumption that what one sees and hears is a fact, rather than a fact-as-perceived. Finally, one must acquire the habits of reminding oneself of this distinction and checking for accuracy by asking questions, paraphrasing, and repeating.

Cultural Parochialism

Neither the presence of potential cross-cultural experiences at home nor living in a foreign culture necessarily leads to learning about culture or to becoming less culturally parochial. Many expatriate residents of Singapore -- Australians, Greeks, North- and South-Americans, Japanese, French, Germans, English -- living there for as many as twenty years have not yet truly *met* a Singaporian. One telling response to my request for an interview about the cross-cultural experiences of visiting academics was, "What cross-cultural experiences? I've been here for three months and the only people I get to talk to are the likes of you."

People who live cosmopolitan lives do not necessarily become less culturally parochial when, out of choice or situational difficulties, they replicate micro-societies that allow them to continue to live in their hometowns, even though they are a million miles away. In Singapore, for instance, I enjoyed a memorable, authentic Greek-village-style celebration of Easter. Whole lambs roasting over charcoal, Greek dancing, Greek wine, Greek church liturgy, Greek music . . . the works. Only the physical surroundings and the spouses

of many of the Greeks were non-Greek. I could have spent my entire year in Singapore hardly knowing that I was not living in a suburb of Athens!

For many interviewees, cross-cultural encounters served only to reinforce their beliefs in the superiority of their own societies and cultures. Indeed, for some, discovering evidence of this superiority seemed to be the main objective for visiting other lands!

In the absence of theoretical understandings of culture and of a motivation to acquire knowledge of one's own and other cultures, people do not automatically develop cultural self-awareness, world-view perspectives, or international thinking simply by being placed at cultural interfaces. This finding has critical implications for training, education, and OD. It is, thus, extremely unwise for business and educational institutions to rely solely on sojourns, study, or work abroad to accomplish the goals of curtailing cultural parochialism and developing international perspective and expertise. For universities and corporations, the practice of measuring the international talents of their human resources by counting their sojourns abroad is fallacious.

It is important, moreover, to distinguish the ethnocentric tendency to view one's own ways as superior from the cultural parochialism that is built into *the very act and process of thinking.* In a fundamental sense, everyone is destined to remain culturally parochial. All must have cultural constructs, that is, categories, values, assumptions, beliefs, and goals of one variety or another to be able to think. But it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, *just as people and human organizations create cultural constructs by which they think and live, if they want to, they are also capable of modifying their cultural constructs, of creating new ones, and even of holding dichotomous sets in their minds simultaneously.* People and organizations can, with effort, become culturally parochial in new ways. The human/organizational

capacity to create and emulate culture at the level of the individual and of the group is, after all, the foundation that supports education, training, and changes of all kinds, including personal and organizational change and development.

The Unawareness of Cultural Unawareness and the Cross-Cultural Fallacy

Cultural *self*-unawareness is a theme related to unfamiliarity with the concept of culture. This, in turn, is a twofold phenomenon. The first component is the substantive unawareness of one's culture. The second is the unawareness of this unawareness. *Individuals don't know, and they don't know that they don't know.* Unless people make a conscious effort to learn their culture, they tend not to know its properties, especially its assumptions, and how these properties and included assumptions influence their ways of thinking, behaving, and perceiving. This unawareness is characteristic of people in all walks of life, even those with impressive educational credentials, who have lived and traveled in other countries and cultures. In their everyday living, people think, perceive the world around them, and act in accordance with the assumptions, value orientations, customs, and traditions of their cultures. But they do so unconsciously and unselfconsciously.

This twofold lack of awareness should not come as a surprise. It exemplifies a common phenomenon: people tend to be least aware of that which is most familiar to them in praxis (action). Furthermore, the very mechanisms of cultural conditioning in childhood socialization render the bulk of everyday thinking, behaving, and perceiving instinctive, and thus unexamined. Were people not able to act on their cultural wisdom near-instinctively, the lions would have eaten them long ago.

The result of cognitive processing and cultural conditioning is that people filter, understand, perceive, and respond to reality with the cognitive tools of their cultures, including taken-for-granted assumptions, self concepts,

value orientations, and images of "the good and honorable life." All too unknowingly, they commit *the cross-cultural fallacy*, that is, interpreting the behavior of people from other cultures by filtering it through the constructs of their own culture. Consequently, people impose meanings and interpretations that are appropriate and usually accurate in their hometowns but *are not necessarily accurate or appropriate in others' hometowns.*

It is important to emphasize that the tendency to exhibit what amounts to *cultural imperialism*, assessing and judging other cultures and their people with the yardsticks of one's own, is often but *not necessarily* the result of an ethnocentric assumption that one's culture is superior or of possessing the attitudes leading to, as the Singaporians say, thinking and acting "like colonials." Instead:

1. People innocently and unknowingly commit errors based on the cross-cultural fallacy. Culturally unaware, they commit these errors mainly because *they do not know* that they are committing them. My data yielded a plethora of incidents demonstrating this unawareness.

2. Culture is complex, elusive, multifaceted, and has many implications. Among them is the implication that culture conditions people to think with the categories, constructs, and symbols that it provides. To think, they must have constructs and symbols with which to think, and those of their culture are the ones they know best and the ones with which they have been conditioned to think. *They have no other choice.*

The most important implication for education, training, and OD related to culture that is demonstrated by my research is the need and usefulness for people to *recognize:*

1. Their unawareness of the concept of culture and its implica-

tions.

2. Their unawareness of their own culture.

3. Their potential for error in understanding others that is automatically built into the process of thinking in cross-cultural causal attributions.

4. Their better preparation for cross-cultural situations when they know that they do not know than when they do not know that they do not know.

That cultural unawareness and cross-cultural fallacies are pervasive and come about near-instinctively cannot be overemphasized. It was a haunting problem in my doctoral study of Greek immigrants (Mohring, 1985) and was demonstrated repeatedly in my research in the United States, Canada, Southeast Asia, and Europe. *Cultural unawareness and cross-cultural fallacies form the core of interpersonal misunderstandings, conflicts, and dissatisfactions in the workplaces and other places in which people interact.*

For example, expatriates in Singapore generally interpreted the behavior of the Singaporians and explained their conflicts and problems with Singaporian people and life by filtering their observations through the cognitive/evaluative lenses of their own cultures and societies. So, too, for the Singaporians' understandings of the actions and reasoning of the expatriates in their midst. The causal attributions of both often rested on the built-in errors of interpreting other peoples' behavior via assumptions, value orientations, meanings, and customs that were neither accurate nor appropriate *to the cultural and societal context* in which the observed behavior was embedded.

In the same way, my research in anti-poverty programs showed that the same phenomenon underlay mutual misunderstandings and misattributions of the predominantly white middle-class U.S.-Americans and low-income white and minority U.S.-Americans.

To be culturally self-unaware -- to be unknowledgeable about one's culture and to be unaware of this unawareness -- is a *natural consequence of culture and of the way our minds work.* This twofold unawareness is especially characteristic of individuals conditioned in monocultural life styles, as most mainstream U.S.-Americans have been. Becoming aware of one's cultural unawareness, and thus acquiring the wisdom of knowing one's cultural ignorance, *requires learning to recognize this unawareness.* In turn, like a prerequisite, this recognition prepares the mind for the development of cultural self-awareness. Recognizing unawareness, moreover, does not necessarily guarantee motivation and learning; some individuals may recognize that they do not know and need to know, but still may not want to know.

Like most of the people observed and interviewed, I as well was ignorant of the specifics of the cultures of the Chinese, the Malays, and the Hindus of Singapore's people and about the history and current organization of the societies of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. This ignorance neither helped *nor hindered* the development of cross-cultural rapport, close relationships with Asians, and the accomplishment of objectives. What was most helpful was, as noted before, the familiarity with the concept of culture, particularly *appreciation of the complexity of cultures and cognizance of ignorance.* I thus earned the attribution: "The expat who is interested in us and asks a lot of questions."

Advising sojourners to ask questions is common in intercultural training manuals and workshops (e.g., Kohls, 1981, 1984a). But asking questions does not come to mind to individuals who do not know that they do not know. In addition to asking questions, among the action guidelines that the self-recognition of ignorance suggests is the need to search for and, thus, to find culture-specific information contained in the available cookbooks about other lands, such as, *Living in Singapore* by the [U.S.-] American Women's Associa-

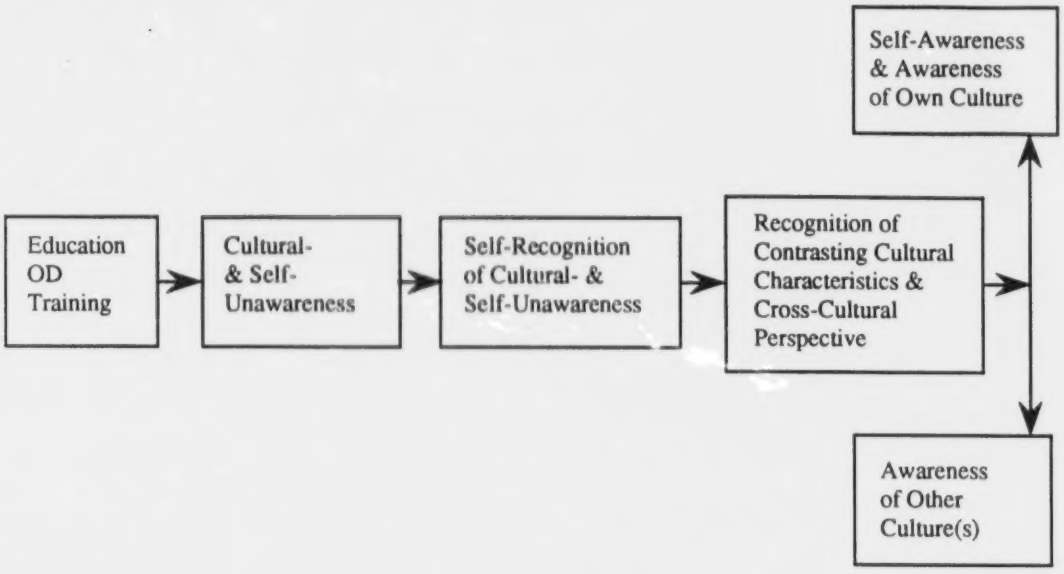

Figure 1. Modules and Process of Cultural Learning

tion and *Culture Shock! What Not to Do in Malaysia and Singapore and How and Why Not to Do It* (Craig, 1979). Although cookbook *approaches* can have disastrous consequences because of inappropriate and often harmful uses of valid empirical generalizations, cookbooks do contain useful information. Many respondents either had not found them at all, had not found them when they needed them most (before or soon after their arrival), or had found them but lacked the felt need to pursue them.

The cross-cultural perspective (Postscript; Stewart, 1972) and exposure to cultures different from one's own facilitate the development of self- and cultural-awareness. This exposure and perspective can serve as tools to uncover the cultural properties, especially assumptions and value orientations governing everyday life, that are taken for granted and are simply difficult to become aware of and recognize. The modules and process of learning are schematically represented in Figure 1.

For example, the U.S.-American's observation in Singapore that "Malays

do not compete" contains information for cultural- and self-awareness, such as: competition may be a prominent value orientation of mine and of U.S.-American culture; competition may not be a "good thing" in the universal image of a good and honorable life. People do not, however, automatically recognize and utilize the dual information that is often contained in their observations of cultural traits different from their own. Learning to do so is a valuable skill for self-directed learning about the self and about culture(s). In my observations, people tend simply to notice the cultural characteristics of the others and not to utilize these observations to reflect on their cultural characteristics. Thus, they tend to learn about the peculiarities of "them" and not about themselves.

The importance of value clarification and self-awareness to intercultural competence as well as to many other people-related competencies is underscored throughout the social science literature, including that on intercultural competence and training, and is confirmed by my own empirical research. My findings accord with, for example, Kohls' (1987) emphasis that "once we understand the values and unstated assumptions of our own culture, we are then able to discover the hidden values and assumptions of other cultures" (p. 8).

However, my findings also underscore the dilemma posed by the relationship between self-awareness and intercultural competence. Self-awareness and awareness of one's own culture are very important for intercultural competence, but are difficult for minds conditioned to a monocultural way of thinking, as are the minds of most mainstream U.S.-Americans. More often than not, *they simply do not possess the necessary insights.* Education, OD, and training interventions are essential to initiate the process. Telling people of the importance of self-awareness and awareness of their culture, like telling them of the importance of asking questions, does not lead to understanding if

they do not possess the requisite knowledge and experience to conceive the need for questions. This is among the reasons why the concepts of *self- and cultural- unawareness* need to be recognized and legitimized first. *To know that you do not know and not feel defensive about this lack of knowledge are very powerful heuristic and motivating tools.* They link logically with, and thus lead the mind to conceive questions, to recognize the need for information, and to seek the needed knowledge. "He who knows that he doesn't know, knows" (Campbell, 1988, p. 55).

In interventions, the recognitions of cultural- and self-unawareness need to be accompanied by stressing (a) the personal *development*, not simply the importance of possessing self-awareness and cultural awareness in cross-cultural encounters and (b) the importance of adopting a learning stance and a cross-cultural perspective to cultural learning, including learning about the values and assumptions of one's self and culture.

It is important to emphasize that: Neither recognition that one is not self-aware and not knowledgeable about his/her culture nor self- and cultural-awareness develop overnight; they are not characteristics that individuals either have or lack. They involve cumulative learning and require interventions to initiate the processes and to nourish the legitimacy of limited knowledge and the benefits of the skill to *ask questions.*

Culture and Traditional Disciplines

Cultural unawareness applies not only to the proverbial persons in the streets but also to the social scientists' unawareness of the influence of culture, including unawareness of the Eurocentric bias in the fields of study that deal with human phenomena. Although, in recent years, concern about this influence of culture (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Krueger, 1974) has indeed emerged, scholars at large either do not know about the influence of culture on their disciplines or are convinced that culture is not relevant to their disciplinary

convictions.

One must not forget the centuries-old economic and technological dominance of the West and of Western thought. This dominance fuels, among other things, a mythology that is often encountered among business people and academics, especially economists. This mythology purports that the marketplace operates by rules that are objective, culture-free, and not influenced by the assumptions, values, and interests that underlie Western thought. The "rules of the marketplace" are assumed to apply equally to people in all cultures. Consequently, the argument goes, cultural differences do not influence the functioning of the world's marketplaces, workplaces, and business transactions. *" A business deal is a business deal,"* says a prominent conservative economist in a confidential interview. *"It is the same all over the world.* That one of the partners in a business deal is a follower of the teachings of Buddha and the other is not is of no relevance and of no consequence to the outcome of a business transaction." This economist's theoretical convictions have been profoundly bolstered by the experience common to such eminent individuals. They navigate around the globe carrying the halo of authority of their high-prestige positions, thereby remaining in what Oberg (1960) labeled the "honeymoon" phase of cross-cultural experiences. This deprives them of becoming aware of their cultural unawareness and the importance of culture.

It is necessary to distinguish between cultural implications, on the one hand, and, on the other, cross-cultural methods, traditional disciplines and fields of study, and area studies.

The challenge that culture poses is that its influence is not restricted to, and consequently is not the focus of, any of the existing traditions of teaching and research. True, anthropology is the study of culture. But anthropologists, too, function much like other specialists in their disciplines. They adopt culture-general or culture-specific approaches and talk about "my

people," or become Africanists, Sinologists, or Latin-Americanists. Rather than acting as research assistants and data gatherers addressing the concerns of the economists (Ruttan, 1988) or the psychologists (Campbell & Naroll 1972; Rosenblatt, 1981), they have disciplinary interests of their own. The interests and the data of anthropologists often overlap but are not necessarily focused on the influence of culture for other disciplines or fields, such as that of doing business with the Japanese -- a concern to business practitioners, teachers in business schools, and OD culture-specific trainers and consultants.

Another question in need of clarification relates to cross-cultural methodologies. The main objective of cross-cultural methods is to pursue a subject matter, *not necessarily the influence of culture* -- for example, comparing socialization practices in New England, Mexico, and India. Similarly, in economics, the data may come from other countries, especially if one's interest in economics is, for example, international trade.

That which answers to implications of culture is not whether the data are from this country or from other countries; instead, *it is the frame of reference and the questions one asks of the data that do.* On a grander scale, what Pedersen (1983) notes for counseling and therapy applies also to the challenge that The Problem and the concept of culture pose for universities and for training and OD in business:

> Much of the energy going into international counseling and therapy lacks focus, hard funds, and full-time commitment by a coordinated team of professionals. More often, the rhetoric in support of intercultural sensitivity is a substitute for action. There is a need for one program, institution, or center to take the leadership and fill this vacuum with a coordinated effort of intercultural expertise. (p. 349)

Culture influences the subject matter and theories of many traditional

fields of study dealing with human phenomena. Consequently, the efficacy of the accumulation and use of the knowledge of this influence would profit much from *synergistic* or, to use an older term (Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983), *collaborative* efforts of faculty, departments, and schools.

Similarly, it is at best inefficient to isolate culture-related competencies and treat them as if they are not for mainstream consumption, but, rather, are needed mainly for inter-ethnic purposes, such as doing business with the Chinese, international competition, multicultural workforces, or counseling minorities or foreign students (Mestenhauser, 1983). Culture is important for *intra*- as well as inter-cultural concerns and interactions. The cardinal issue is *diversity*. Besides ethnicity and nationality, a great many other human diversities, such as skin color and gender, often create their own versions of culture-specific differences and similarities. In an important sense, *all* interpersonal interactions are much like intercultural interactions. With an integrated approach, many human-resource development, OD, and such training objectives as supervision and leadership would indeed *profit from and contribute to* culture-related knowledge and competencies. Recall that a major asset of contrasting cultural situations and perspectives is that they highlight aspects of human phenomena that are difficult to detect in monocultural settings and perspectives. It is for this reason that contrasting cultural perspectives can be powerful heuristic laboratories for developing people-related competencies.

The greater concern with the importance of culture and cultural differences in the past two or three decades is associated with, and may well be largely due to, the ascendance of the economic power of non-Western countries and cultures and the loss of the superior power position that the near-monopoly of resources, products, and expertise conferred on the United States during the Post-World-War-II era. During these decades, the efforts of inter-

nationally minded professionals and associations, such as the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR), and of programs, such as the Peace Corps and race relations training in the Army and the Navy, have led to more training, research, and recognition of the importance of and the need for expertise in the fields of intercultural relations, adjustments, competence, and communication. Like OD, these are applications that are theoretically rooted in the discipline of social psychology. However, the very knowledge gathered in these decades serves also to reveal *how little is known and how much more there is to learn.* More emphasis on researching the influence of culture on thematic disciplinary and OD concerns is, indeed, needed.

In summary, cultural unawareness, that is, substantive unawareness and unawareness of this unawareness, characterizes academics, not just the proverbial "persons in the streets." This twofold unawareness, including the limited knowledge of the influence of culture on social-science knowledge and the high likelihood of unrecognized Eurocentric biases hidden in this knowledge, must openly be recognized and conveyed to clients and shareholders, such as students, trainees, counselees, and organizations. This must be done for the sake of honesty about the state of the arts, but also to (a) discourage dependence on the expertise (especially factual) of others -- laypersons or professionals; (b) encourage the development of skills for *independent* effectiveness (McCaffery, 1986) and learning needed for effective multicultural interfaces and worldwide interdependence; and (c) encourage the development of *practice- and research*-oriented OD and training processes necessary for effective internationalization of business and for working effectively with people of diverse cultures and lifestyles in this country as well as abroad.

Footnotes

1. The term "U.S.-American" rather than "American" is admittedly cumbersome. However, the less awkward common use of "American" offends people from the other countries of North and South America.

2. My use of the term "operate" is in the Piagetian sense of the approach (including methods, rules, and philosophical and cultural value orientations) to problems.

3. The same argument applies to the distinction between the approaches referred to as Etic, for the "objective" view, and Emic, for the "inside" view. The distinctions between Etic and Emic, and between Culture-general and Culture-specific are, in my view, orthogonal. Both Etic and Emic approaches may focus on both Culture-general and Culture-specific content and concerns.

Postscript: Data Resources and Method

1. The research I did in Singapore during 1982-1983, while I was affiliated with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, dealt with the characteristics that facilitate (or hinder) successful intercultural experiences. Singapore is a superlative intercultural laboratory providing extensive opportunities for intercultural experiences, observations, and interviews. The target populations were non-Singaporian faculty (Asians and Caucasians); local faculty, staff, and students of the National University of Singapore (Asians); and business people associated with multinational corporations (Asians and Caucasians). To gain contrasting situational and socioeconomic contexts and perspectives, I incorporated into the research the perspectives and intercultural experiences of as many other individuals from contrasting societal positions as I could manage, such as taxi-drivers (grand informants), foreign service personnel, government officials, shop owners, servants, managers, and shoppers (Asians and Caucasians).

My background includes training and research experience in both quantitative and qualitative approaches, but I prefer naturalistic settings for research. I have a philosophical affinity for unobtrusive (Triandis, 1983) methods of gathering data from everyday life. I view my personal experiences, activities, and involvement as valid and valuable sources of data. In Singapore, my life and my research were fused, much as are faces of the same coin. Nearly all of my everyday activities offered opportunities to research intercultural encounters. In addition to observations, focused informal discussions, and participant-as-observer activities in the everyday interactions among Asians and Caucasians, my methodology included 66 two- to three-hour, theoretically focused, unstructured, planned interviews.

Singapore is a highly self-censored society; information does not flow

freely. Politically, it runs like a tight ship (Buruma, 1988). As in so many other countries, the vast majority of expatriates live in social bubbles populated by their own kind. Nevertheless, it proved possible to develop the necessary rapport to interview (and receive personal and politically sensitive information from) Singaporians in high and low socioeconomic and administrative positions and to develop close relations with them at all levels. It thus became possible to incorporate into the research participant observations and interviews about the factors that, from *their* perspective, facilitate (or hinder) intercultural relationships with the many expatriates in their midst.

2. My experience and research in Singapore would not have been possible had I not gained a theoretical and experiential familiarity with the schema of culture from my previous training, research, and experience. This training began as a Fulbright graduate student from Greece in the field of social psychology. It was followed by an intercultural marriage and living and working in the United States. Two sojourns in Canada (2 years in Toronto and 6 months in Vancouver) added still more to this experience.

A prominent finding of all of my research should be underscored here: *people do not necessarily learn from their experiences and observations; they learn that which they have learned to learn and that which they are motivated to learn.* In addition to life experiences, learning about one's own culture and other people's cultures requires special skills, knowledge, motivation, and a learning-how-to-learn *modus operandi* (Hughes-Wiener, 1986). It is not "just" living and working, then, that converted the intercultural experiences and observations inherent in my everyday life into research opportunities for learning about culture. Rather, it is the naturalistic approach that, in my case, evolved from the *interaction* of my training in social psychology and qualitative research methodologies and the circumstances of my life with its built-in cross-cultural dimension.

Of special help in such research are the cross-cultural perspective (Stewart, 1972) and conflict methodology (Mohring, 1985). They recognize the methodological value of cross-cultural encounters and the use of cultural confrontations to reveal hidden cultural assumptions. They recognize, in other words, that cross-cultural encounters have heuristic utility, hence they utilize these encounters for heuristic purposes. For example, listening to *and probing* the understandings of U.S.-Americans about Greeks reveals a great deal about *U.S.-Americans*. Similarly, listening to Greek perceptions of U.S.-Americans reveals cultural assumptions of the *Greeks*. My work with Native Americans offered another cross-cultural perspective that highlighted characteristics of Greek and U.S.-American cultures, and so on.

3. My first encounter with the hidden complexities and implications of culture in a formal research setting was in my doctoral-dissertation research. The research uncovered an extensive lack of fit between the adaptation of Greek immigrants in the United States and relevant social science theories. It also revealed a conflict (hence my use of the term "conflict methodology") with methods that appear to work with mainstream U.S.-Americans. The theoretical lack of fit and the methodological conflict were mainly due to the importance of *cultural assumptions*, that is, the U.S.-American cultural assumptions hidden in social science theories and methods, on the one hand, and those of Greek immigrants, on the other.

4. My work and research in the 1960s with anti-poverty programs in the United States and sojourns in Canada offered insights stemming from (a) intercultural encounters of Native Americans, Blacks, Mexicans, and low-income whites with mainstream, predominantly middle-class U.S.-Americans and U.S.-American institutions; and (b) the contrasts between Canadian and U.S.-American societies and cultures, the many mutual misunderstandings between Canadians and U.S.-Americans, and differences in adaptations of and responses

to ethnic groups and immigrants.

5. Finally, my 1982-1983 research in Singapore profited from my research in 1981-1982 on the conceptual understandings that key faculty and staff of the University of Minnesota had of The Problem. The research included interviewees' opinions about the relation of the concerns to the internationalization of education and disciplinary/departmental and university-wide objectives.

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